

Shame

by Aurette

One who escaped... still sees.

Shame

Chapter 1 of 1

One who escaped... still sees.

My deep thanks to my beta Karelia, and to Dressagegrl for her help pointing out the lumps.

□

Robes twitch out of reach while eyes focus on anything else. Mothers pull children closer, acting in that instinctive way they do, partly casual, partly cautionary. Teaching by example. Window shoppers and evening strollers walk the pavement, crossing the cobbled street as if it was their intention all along. All of them clinging to the illusion that the unseen aren't there. There's no reason to feel uncomfortable.

But they are.

There is.

They don't see because they are desperate not to.

He sees. He sees them all. He was one of them once. Still is, in the most painful way.

He watches as pale, fragile Valerian Malfoy digs through the rubbish skip outside of the Leaky, looking for supper. Sees Mignonette Blishwick dart after a discarded quill, tossed to the ground by a young witch who hadn't even noticed her Vanishing Spell missed. Mignonette had been too close. Too... *there*.

Mignonette Blishwick. Her name spoke of her proud family's dreams. He'd been sweet on her once, back when they were young. Back when they both thought it was only a matter of patience and time. Before despair had set in like gangrene. Mignonette had been pretty then. He'd been a bit of something himself.

Now?

No.

Being unseen takes its toll.

A glance at the sky shows rain coming. Soon they would scurry away, back to the alleys or empty doorsteps where they could sleep in safety. Or the less reputable places where they were welcomed. Places that sucked the dreams and beauty out of the Mignonettes and Valerians. Places where the unseen sold themselves for a chance to be seen. Wizards and witches don't care who you are when they want to buy a moment of your worship for a sickle or two.

Mignonette darts out into the street after a sweetie wrapper caught in a breeze. It's pink. She always liked pink.

A child sees her and points, only to be soundly smacked by his mother and dragged away. The child's father lingers to glare at the faded wretch clutching her pretty. Mignonette holds it up, sharing her delight. With a disgusted sound, the man turns away, turns back to his fragile delusion that there are no homeless and squibs are rare.

Familiar footsteps approach, and he turns to see his employer.

"Have everything, Argus?" Dumbledore asks.

"Yes, Headmaster," he replies. "I've got a case of mop-heads and two new push-brooms being sent on to the castle."

"Excellent. Shall we go home?"

And there it is. The thing that separates him from the rest of them.

A home.

He looks back at Mignonette shuffling off down the pavement, a bundle of rags topped with wild, grey hair. She used to be so pretty.

"Yes, Headmaster. Whenever you're ready."

Glorious, coveted magic rips him away from a world he'd left behind that day Dumbledore saw him.

Next time, he will bring her something pink.

Prompt: An unseen presence unsettles the denizens of Diagon Alley.